

Feminist Funding Practices



Compiled for the EDGE Conference 2018 – Feminist Organizing Session by Grassroots Global Justice Alliance (GGJ) from conversations with Third Wave Fund, Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice, Groundswell Fund's Liberation Fund, AWID (Association of Women's Rights in Development), and MamaCash.

Feminist funding is not just about gender equity. Being a feminist funder is also about orienting funding practices toward the long-term work of challenging systemic patriarchy, which can be slow and exhausting. Victories happen incrementally or over a long period of time, and strategies need to go beyond just integrating language about gender or bringing in leadership of women and gender nonconforming people. **These recommendations seek to address systemic patriarchal tendencies in philanthropic practices.**

There has been a lot of work to advance gender justice in the EDGE Funders Alliance by the Gender Justice Initiative, with leadership from Urgent Action Fund Latin America, MamaCash, Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice and others. We spoke with a few feminist funders to compile some Feminist Funder Practices, and to offer a survey as a tool for philanthropic partners to assess feminist giving practices and discuss amongst colleagues. We offer this as an additional resources, building on all the work that has been done over the years within and beyond EDGE.

- ★ **Establish long term relationships with grantees:** *Creates trust to allow the organization to explore new strategies, acknowledges that gender justice work must take a long-term approach if it's going to be effective. Making multi-year commitments can reduce the harm and stress that is reminiscent of unhealthy relationships where the funder can choose to walk away at any moment. Engage in site visits to understand not just to evaluate: Acknowledge the power dynamic inherent in funding, and get to know the people doing the work.*
- ★ **Provide flexible general support funds:** *Covering operating expenses is a feminist act. Feminist workplaces cost more resources (childcare, healthcare, etc). For example, often healthcare is defined around cis male bodies and if we want workplaces to transform they need to be able to provide better care. Some organizations create special healthcare funds to support care that is not covered by most insurance (trans health, abortion, adoption, etc.)*
- ★ **Value a range of advancements not just policy wins:** *Challenging patriarchy can be slow and exhausting, and victories may happen incrementally or over a long period of time. Assess the achievements of grantees in terms that include narrative explanations of advancements in the work, beyond just policy outcomes. As **Astraea** says in their Social Justice Grantmaking Values: "Social change is a journey as well as a destination."*
 - *Gender socialization affects the way people take credit for the work they do, which affects the way they convey their work in funding proposals, which plays into the typical funder focus on tangible policy outcomes and campaign wins. Ask questions that encourage people to explain*

the role they play in the organizing they do, the work that moved them forward even if they wouldn't necessarily call it a "win".

- *Center sustainability & healing justice: Even if it looks small at the moment, recognize that healing justice can be a pathway to transforming society and may not lead to immediate change. Gender-oppressed people may need the space to transform themselves and build the power and confidence to be the kind of leaders that many cis-men are encouraged to be from birth.*



Take an intersectional or ecosystem approach to funding: *As MamaCash says: "A gender perspective is not an additional burden, it is merely recognising how gender is already affecting our work... Using a gender lens is a way of thinking, rather than an extra task to do." AWID says that a Feminist Funding Ecosystem approach "Recognizes the complexity, dynamism and fluidity of any ecosystem where the expansion or contraction of one part affects all parts of the system... Looks at all areas of transformative change taking a holistic rather than an issue based approach and recognizes how they relate to each other; for example climate justice, labour rights, migrant rights etc."*



Recognize, value and compensate invisibilized labor: *Examples from Third Wave—*

- 1) *Application and site visits are a lot of work, they statistically come across as a net loss for groups that apply. Third Wave gives reimbursement for the labor of going through an application process. If you don't get a grant, you get \$500 for applying. If they do a site visit they pay \$1,500.*
- 2) *Grantmaking Panelists (decision makers on grantmaking team) are young women trans POC under 25, and are paid \$150/hour because that's the kind of rate that an older white cis man would likely be compensated for similar work in the philanthropy sector.*
- 3) *Third Wave has a 32 hour, 4-day work week to compensate for disproportionate amount of unpaid labor that women, trans people and LGBTQ people do outside the workplace, and ensures cost of living and salary increases to offset the "double whammy" of unequal pay—gender-oppressed people are often expected to cover all the family and home caretaking outside work hours on a lower salary.*



Prioritize "self-led" groups whose leadership reflects constituencies they serve: *In particular, prioritize groups that are led by women and trans people of color who reflect communities directly impacted by the conditions the group seeks to transform. When you consider funding an organization, do you ask about who is most impacted by the issue, and whether the people most affected by the issue help to design and/or implement the programs? Look beyond what they say at who is in leadership and how decisions get made.*

- *Include questions about the organization's approach to feminism & gender justice as part of the grant review process.*
- *Include a demographics chart to better understand the demographics of the group's leadership and to communicate feminist values in what demographic information you are looking for.*



Go beyond grantmaking: *Use your power to influence others in philanthropy. Join your grantees in shifting power relationships by convening discussions, making statements with an institutional voice, encouraging the flow of more resources to best support communities.*